

UWTSD Category Leadership

Dr Jane Davidson
Director of INSPIRE @UWTSD
(Institute for Sustainable Practice,
Innovation and Resource Effectiveness at the
University of Wales Trinity Saint David)

The candidate's approach

Summary

From 2011 to 2015 I have been leading the development of the virtual institute, INSPIRE – the Institute for Sustainable Practice, Innovation and Resource Effectiveness – at the new University of Wales Trinity Saint David. INSPIRE has overseen the systematic and systemic introduction and embedding of sustainability principles across all the university's activities through our culture, curriculum, campuses and community. Prior to the commitment to establish INSPIRE, the university had no previous history of involvement in the sustainability agenda. Now, three years on, INSPIRE has won the Guardian Award for Sustainability in HE in 2013, the Soil Association Gold Catering Mark in 2014 for its support for local producers in conferences and events – the first University to do so - and in 2015, UWTSD rose from 113th in the UK and a 3rd class degree, to a 1st class degree and 8th in UK and 1st in Wales in the People and Planet University League – the fastest riser in the history of the league. As a result, I am regularly asked to share the INSPIRE approach within and outside the UK. The core of our mission is to embed sustainability throughout all aspects of the university's delivery and ensure that we can demonstrate that we are delivering on sustainability principles – ie walking the walk, not just talking the talk.

Project partners

Staff, students, governors at the university and the colleges plus external expert practitioners through our 'Professor of Practice' model, e.g the Commissioner for Future Generations in Wales. In return for the University's public recognition of the talents of an Honorary Professor of Practice, the Professor is expected to contribute a minimum of three practice sessions per annum to the University. This has enabled us to recruit a range of national and international experts to assist in our strategic agendas.



Profile

- HEI
- 11,400 students
(includes full and part
time students)
- 2,125 staff
- Urban and Rural



The results

The problem

The new University of Wales Trinity Saint David is formed from 4 mergers so far; in 2010, Lampeter University with Trinity College Carmarthen; in 2013 UWTSD and Swansea Metropolitan University and in 2014 the creation of the UWTSD Group which includes two FE colleges – Coleg Sir Gar with 5 campuses in Carmarthenshire and Coleg Ceredigion with 2 campuses in Ceredigion. The university now has 16 locations in Wales and a Business School in London. Its next planned merger is with the University of Wales in 2016/2017. Before the launch of INSPIRE in 2012, no part of the university had any previous history of involvement in the sustainability agenda.

The approach

The new university participated in the HEA Green Academy programme in 2010 and subsequently made a commitment to establish a new Wales Institute for Sustainability. When I was appointed in 2011, I asked for - and was given - the assurance that the new university was prepared to systemically demonstrate its commitment to sustainability internally as well as externally. INSPIRE was therefore set up to systemically embed the new strategic commitment across all aspects of university delivery.

Our goals

INSPIRE initially established 'commitments', then targets/KPIs from the outset and has monitored activity quarterly and annually on the basis of a 5 year plan from 2012-2017. The core KPIs of the new university have been recently reviewed to move from development to delivery. We are now in the third year of faculty sustainability plans and the second year of full departmental plans.

2012 - post launch, the focus was on building the strategic argument, building the evidence base, engaging with staff and students and building capacity to deliver. A set of 'commitments' were agreed by the University Council and SMT including a staff skills audit, sustainability becoming one of 5 core strategic principles reported on annually; the establishment of a university wide Sustainable Development Group; new sustainable development related degree programmes and embedding sustainability into 15% of all students' experiences by autumn 2013; environmental and carbon management systems and student paid internships.

(For more details, look at the INSPIRE prospectus on http://issuu.com/trinitysaintdavid/docs/inspire_e-booklet_eng?e=0/6570513)

2013 - INSPIRE published the first annual report, as a result of which the first Key Performance Indicator (Embedding Sustainability) was established with 4 sub PIs. The Sustainability Committee was set up to ensure strategic monitoring along with Sustainability Link Contacts in every School and Department to build capacity and expertise. The 2013 – 2017 University Strategic Plan enshrined the following PIs in support of the KPI – Embedding Sustainability with the reporting mechanism through Sustainability Committee.

KPI: Embedding Sustainability

- Improve performance in People and Planet University League
- Embed Faculty sustainability plans throughout the academic and support structures
- Complete curriculum audits and develop the curriculum with due regard to the emerging sustainability agenda
- Maximise research, project and consultancy income related to sustainability (to be quantified in line with ongoing curriculum/research review)

2014 – A new Sustainability Strategy was agreed with a focus on embedding sustainability including the mandatory use of the new QAA/HEA guidance on embedding Education for Sustainable Development into the curriculum through validation. (For more details, see <http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/strategies-policies/sustainability-strategy.pdf>)

2015 – Core university KPIs revised to reflect evidence and delivery timescales to sharpen commitments.

KPI: Embedding Sustainability

Performance in P&P University League	Maintaining First Class degree	Reports to Sustainability Committee Annual publication	Quarterly Annually
Curriculum Audits	Embedding of sustainability principles within the curriculum	Sustainability Curriculum Reports submitted to Sustainability and LTE Committees and Senate	Quarterly
Environmental Sustainability Data	Outcomes of Green Dragon and University League audits; comparison of annual EMS data submitted to HESA	.Internal Audit Report 2014/15 .Staff Bulletins provides an update on Estates and Sustainability issues .Annual report on Environmental Sustainability data and audit outcomes	Quarterly Annually
Implementation of Faculty and Departmental Sustainability Plans	Number of plans implemented, what and when implemented	.Sustainability Strategy and annual reports .Minutes of the Sustainability Committee	Annually Quarterly

Obstacles

- Demonstrating strategic commitment
- Identifying staff capacity and buy-in
- Evaluating pedagogical approach
- Getting estates/operations on board
- Getting students on board
- Keeping governors on board

Solutions

- Introducing systemic approach
- Conducting university-wide staff skills survey
- INSPIRE validating programmes/curriculum review
- Corporate strategic commitment
- Internships and partnerships
- Demonstrating fruits of success

Performance and results

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Lessons learned

- Sustainability is about institutional values. An institution has to be prepared to reform itself before advising others. Gandhi said 'Be the change you want to see in the world'
- There is no short cut to delivering the sustainability agenda. You cannot embed new cultures or ideas quickly but a systematic and systematic approach is probably the quickest route
- Seizing opportunities as they arise is important. The mergers we have been involved in have meant that partner institutions have been in flux – by having the sustainability agenda as a constant – it has become a 'golden thread'
- Award schemes such as Green Gown and others are very important as they help increase the standing of the institution, network the new university with other partners and give the governors more confidence about operating in a niche area as a university.

Sharing your project

We have been invited to share our journey in many universities and other organisations. Wherever possible, we accept these opportunities to help support others and learn from them too.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

'I would be delighted if the University were to win a Green Gown Award. Such a prestigious accolade would acknowledge our commitment to sustainability as one of our core values and most importantly it would celebrate the excellent work and inspiring work of colleagues and students across the University's campuses.'

Professor Medwin Hughes, DL Vice-Chancellor University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Further information

Jane Davidson, Director of INSPIRE jane.davidson@uwtsd.ac.uk Tel: 01267676765.

Twitter (English Version) @UWTSD
Facebook: University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Twitter (Welsh Version) @drindoddewisant
URL <http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/>